

TOP STORIES #114

Welcome to TOP STORIES, which has been published for more than 22 years!

It has now been more than 2 years since we have been publishing weekly.

#114 is packed with news, including a story about a fish!

As a user of Microsoft technologies, you are receiving this publication to stay informed about critical topics such as Microsoft licensing, price increases (some bad news below), end-of-life dates, technical updates, security notices, and more.

I recommend you scan through "**Don't Forget**" which is now a separate document for you to download - it was making TOP STORIES too long to read through.

Reminder that you can access [TOP STORIES AI \("TSAI"\)](#) to search for anything in the archive. You can read more about TSAI in [TOP STORIES #108](#).

You will need an MS ID to sign in, and if you are using your corporate ID, this might require organisational permission.

Check out the **official movie release dates in South Africa for all studios at the bottom of this email**. The schedule has been updated to provide you with releases four weeks in advance. It is accurate!

Last week's [TOP STORIES #113 is here](#)

If you would like to invite other colleagues to join this newsletter (even if it is just for the movie release dates), they can [click here](#).

If you do not want to continue receiving TOP STORIES, click on the unsubscribe link at the bottom of the mail.

Upcoming Shows

The next big computer show of the year is [Computex](#), which is coming up in May. NVIDIA will, of course, make a big splash **with the keynote**. We are also going to see **announcements from AMD** that will be great news for consumers and a headache for NVIDIA. Intel is also **getting ready to release some high end GPU cards** as well. Computex is going to be very interesting!

Microsoft Build is scheduled to start on 19 May in Seattle, and you can surely expect for AI to be hyped up big time!

You will be able to watch the Keynotes for free. [You can read more here](#).

Account Manager?

Not sure who is your account manager? [Click here for us to help sort that out!](#)

Did you Know?

First Technology Group is the most certified—with over 25 years of experience—and the ONLY 24/7/365 Operational Technology Security provider in the country.

The team can provide deep insights into the dark corners of your network that normal discovery tools can't see.

There's a great story of how "**a fish brought down a casino**" — **check out our Security section below for hacks like that, and some more recent ones.**

This team's job is to find the "fish" inside your company: devices quietly lurking and capable of bringing everything down.

IoT devices are rarely fully discovered on a company network. They often speak weird protocols that slip straight past segmentation.

And it's not always your gear — sometimes it's stuff contractors plug in while servicing or repairing something.

We've got a real example of a wind farm that was compromised because a contractor connected an inverter to the network — just to help hoist the turbines into position.

That was all it took to expose the entire farm to attack!

This team knows how to find that kind of thing. And stop it.

If you're curious (or scared) about what's hiding in your network, speak to your First Technology account manager to connect you with our OT specialists, who can help you find and fix these

types of problems you didn't even know were there, or even just to see and hear the story of the Windfarm!

Don't Forget!

This an important section - it summarises all of Microsoft Products that are coming up for End of Support and/or End of Life. The sheer volume of changes and products coming to EoL and EoS is so long that I have made this a separate document, [which you can download here](#). It will be updated at least quarterly (or as necessary) to try and keep you up to date with the ever-changing Microsoft release roadmap.

I recommend you take a look at the document, it provides a lot of detail about what is ending, changing and updating!

Feedback on making it easier to read along with things I may have missed will be appreciated as well!

NO MORE FREE TECHNICAL SUPPORT FROM MICROSOFT

Microsoft has ended it's programs where you could get free support. You can read more about what we have done to mitigate that below.

Microsoft Planner Transition set for August

On the 2nd May, Microsoft announced that Project for web, including Project and Roadmap apps in Teams, are being retired in August. Microsoft now wants you to transition to Planner as it consolidates into one work experience, and then goes on to explain what features will not be available. There will be no licensing changes or any Migration steps to undertake. You can [read all about this migration here](#).

No more updates for Microsoft Maps - this is now being deprecated and will be removed from the Microsoft Store by July 2025. You can [read more about this here](#).

Hardware

NVIDIA & Mediatek to unveil ARM chips at Computex

As you know, Windows 11 also runs on ARM, but it is struggling to get interest because very few apps run on ARM natively, preventing broader adoption. This announcement will likely see processors even more powerful and efficient for Windows, increasing the attractiveness of an alternative to Intel and AMD, which will of course spur them to do better as well.

This will not impact your buying decisions until well into 2026, but this development will be worth following closely. [You can read more about the announcement here](#).

Sony's Flagship headphones release in May

For those who want only the best in headphones, Sony is launching the WH-1000XM6 with a bunch of improvements and a hefty price tag. [You can read more here](#).

Convert 2D video into 3D Holograms in real time

Researchers at ETRI have developed a silicone based media processor that can convert a 4K video stream from 2D to 3D at 30FPS in real time! This is going to result in some very interesting technologies in the next few years, as this technology will surely be licensed and incorporated to systems from the likes of Apple, Samsung, Sony, Meta, etc.... [You can read more about this here](#).

Microsoft

Flexible Virtualisation Benefit Licensing Guide April 2025

Microsoft has updated this document which you can [download here](#). You will see it listed for May. The last time the document was updated was in 2022 - the older document is actually handy to have as it has some informative diagrams to help understand the guide better. **Please contact your First Technology account manager if you need to review this benefit, or if you need the older documentation.**

Downgrade Rights updated April 2025

Microsoft has published an [updated Downgrade Rights licensing guide](#) (last updated in 2022), which clarifies what you can—and definitely can't—do when downgrading Windows, Office, and Server products.

It now includes product-specific examples, confirms that downgrades between editions (e.g. Pro Plus to Standard) are not allowed unless explicitly stated, and introduces a new CAL version compatibility matrix for Windows Server 2025. There's also a polite reminder that if you're downgrading to an end-of-life product without ESU, you're on your own.

Please contact your First Technology Account Manager to understand the nuances of these downgrade rights and how you may benefit from applying them in your business.

Exchange Online to Cut Off Apps and Devices starting Sept. 2025

Directions on Microsoft has published a blog to remind companies that starting September 2025, Exchange Online will finally block SMTP client submission using Basic Authentication — a long-overdue move given its security flaws.

That's your cue to double-check what's still sending email via "scan-to-mail" MFDs or legacy CRM alerts. Microsoft isn't cutting off Basic Auth entirely — it's monetising the insecurity. If you want to keep using it, there's High Volume Email for Microsoft 365 (internal only, **Basic allowed until 2028**), or Azure Communication Services for external sends.

Both come at a cost.

Modern Authentication is, of course, the better fix — if your devices can support it. If not, it's either pay up or patch up. You can [read more in the Directions On Microsoft Blog here](#) Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our messaging specialists to help work through these implementations, and to see if you do need to set up a new system to handle these legacy messaging apps.

Microsoft extends Windows 10 support for M365 apps like Teams, Outlook, OneDrive

In a surprise move, Microsoft has just announced that it will continue to support M365 on Windows 10 for **3 years after support for the operating system has expired**.

It seems that this support is not conditional on you needing to buy Extended Support. Of course Microsoft advises that you migrate to Windows 11 as soon as possible as running on an unsupported operating system is not a good idea, even if M365 continues to be supported. I think this is going to get confusing very quickly - does this mean Edge will also be supported?

You can [read more about this announcement here](#).

Please contact your First Technology account manager to discuss if this announcement changes your plans to migrate to Windows 11 24H2 and if it allows for a different planning schedule....

I think continuing to run on Windows 10 will get messy as the line between what is supported and not will get very blurry, and if it's at all possible, you should continue with the plans to switch off Windows 10 completely by October this year.

Teams to Block Screen capture during meetings

Microsoft has announced a feature that will prevent screen capture. This addresses an increasing concern from corporations that sensitive information shared in meetings is leaked to unauthorised parties. This addresses the issue of users being able to easily screenshot or record sensitive content without consent. Additionally, there will be far more detailed logging of screen sharing and "Take Control" activity. This feature will start rolling out in July. You can [read more about how it will work here](#).

It's going to get complicated - how will this impact the "Recall" feature that is supposed to record everything?

Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our Teams specialists to understand just how effective this feature will be and what additional measures you can take to prevent leakage or logging who is leaking sensitive information.

Security

A Fish, A Thermometer, and A Lesson

Back in 2017, Darktrace reported that attackers had gained access to the Casino through a smart Thermometer connected to the network, allowing the temperature of the tank to be monitored remotely. You can [read more about this here](#).

In 2025, IoT is literally in every device, even ones you would not think would even need IoT intelligence - here is an example of how crosswalks (the ones that tell you if you can walk or not at a crossing) got hacked to play nefarious messages. You can [read about this very recent hack here](#).

Today, even innocent-looking serial-to-ethernet devices are vulnerable, and you will be staggered to find out just how many you have lurking on your network unpatched, outdated and completely off your radar. Fish Tanks, air conditioners, fingerprint readers, PA systems, amplifiers, door

scanners.....the list goes on and on..... could be inside your network. You can read [more about this vulnerability here](#).

The really dangerous ones are WiFi-connected or have been brought into your environment by a contractor that you have no visibility of.

The Lesson is that the invisible part of your network needs to be scanned, and we have a specialised team that does exactly that.

It is important to note that if your existing security partner is not scanning the dark corners, it does not mean that they are doing a bad job.

You actually need a team of people who specialise only in this aspect of security to use specialised tools to discover what is really going on - and that's **why** you need a **team of people** with specialised skills to do this, as no one tool can scan everything, even with AI helping.

You can [read an interesting article here that explains why you need specialised tools for scanning OT environments](#).

As you have seen in "Did you Know" above, First Technology Group has the **ONLY** team available 24/7/365 that can actually help expose the vulnerabilities, deal with them and monitor your network thereafter.

Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with these specialists to see how they can help you with your network. EVERY SINGLE COMPANY has IoT devices, if you think you don't have any, you have just not found them!

FBI Warns Outdated Routers Getting Hacked

In keeping with the IoT theme this week, the FBI has published a notice warning about using outdated routers in your environment, even if they are working just fine. A list of Linksys and CISCO routers have been published that you should get rid of ASAP. (and of course, many other brands have the same problem), you can [read more about this notice here](#).

Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our security specialists to help discover outdated devices in your environment and/or to make sure the systems you have running are actually configured properly to discover vulnerabilities and protect you from attacks. Over 60% of companies that live under the illusion that the tools they have implemented protect them, but are misconfigured, have been hacked.

You can [read more about this scary statistic here](#).

Proactive Phishing Defense - A CISO's guide

Phishing is becoming by far the most dangerous of cyber threats, as this is an attack through the human interface to your company, the people, and **that includes YOU!**

It is critical to focus on fostering a cyber-aware culture through training, gamification, vigilance and leadership by example. You can [read more here](#).

AI is making the whole problem way worse, the attacks have fewer typos, and the email can be formatted to appear to have come from an executive, all the way down to you getting an entire, completely convincing email thread. It is [very interesting to read about this](#), and just how sophisticated these attacks are getting, and by how much they are increasing.

First Technology Group has multiple programs and partners in place to help with the training of your users and keeping them up to date and alert for new attacks.

PLEASE contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with the teams that provide this training and work on a schedule. This training should never stop.

Cloud & AI

AI for the World

OpenAI will keep running as a non-profit with the noble ideal of making the most advanced AI's available to everybody, grandly stating that "we want to build a brain for the world".

Let's see how this plays out..... You can [read more about the grand ideal here](#).

Somehow, I think capitalism is going to get in the way here.

What's up at FTG

Cloud costing you more than expected?

First Technology Group is stepping up your cloud financial management game with Umbrella (formerly Anodot Cost) — our preferred platform for FinOps and Cloud Cost Management. Umbrella unlocks faster innovation, deeper insights, and robust cost optimisation, empowering you to proactively manage your cloud spend and enhance financial efficiency.

As a Platinum preferred partner across Africa, FTG brings you unmatched expertise and tailored support, ensuring a smooth integration of Umbrella into your current systems with minimal operational disruption.

Here's what **Umbrella** means:

- **Enhanced Cost Management:** Full visibility of your cloud expenses to pinpoint savings.
- **Improved Financial Efficiency:** Powerful analytics to guide smarter cloud investments.
- **Seamless Integration:** Effortlessly combines with your existing infrastructure.

Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect with our SAM or FinOps teams to see how they can help you optimise your cloud costs. Even if you may think you have your costs under control there is no harm in asking somebody else to take a look.... just in case!

Free Microsoft Support Ends

Microsoft has ended free technical support for Azure.

The only free support you now get is for billing and subscription issues.

Microsoft now charges **\$650 per support incident - NB! Not a typo!!**

BUI, FTG's Cloud and Security division has introduced a new support model that mitigates some of this impact - you can [read more and sign up for more information here](#) .

Please contact your First Technology account manager to discuss your support requirements, as First Technology group can provide **GLOBAL SUPPORT 24/7/365** for a wide range of vendors, **including Microsoft**.

FT-KZN Upgrades Senate Chambers

The chambers at Mangosuthu University have been completely upgraded with state-of-the-art technology to facilitate how modern meetings and presentations are conducted. This is one of many examples of what the team in KZN is able to achieve. You can [read more about this here](#).

If you think your installation might be a bit complicated and needs integration with multiple vendors, contact your First Technology account manager, who can connect you with a team that can help.

Pitfalls with Dynamics 365

The CRM Team, of First Technology Group [have published a document on ITWeb](#) about avoiding the pitfalls of a D365 Customer engagement implementation. If you are looking to dive down the D365 rabbit hole, this is a good article to read. Then, contact our Dynamics 365 specialists on the [CRM Team website](#) or through your First Technology account manager.

What does a World Class SoC look like, and how does it work?

You are invited to book a tour of one of our SoC (Security Operations Center) nodes (and there are still parts we can't show you). You can [book for the tour here](#).

BUI blog - 6th and 7th (Entra Suite Overview) Videos Available

FTG's Azure and security division, BUI's Video Blog, has been updated with 2 more videos.

The [6th Edition addresses improvements to Defender XDR](#), and the [7th Edition is crucial to review, as it provides an overview of the Microsoft Entra Suite](#).

Joint Standard 2 on Cyber Security and Resilience

BUI has published a 1-page guide for you to gauge your compliance and, if you have concerns, to reach out to the BUI specialists for assistance. The [guide is available here](#).

BUI Opens 4th Cyber Security Operations Centre in Kenya

As part of BUI's investment in talent in Africa and the broader East African region, BUI, together with the Microsoft country manager for Kenya, held the inauguration ceremony of the new Cyber SOC. You can read [more about this launch here](#).

Movies

We have a good lineup for late May - Thunderbolts, Final Destination, Lilo & Stitch. Mission Impossible are highlights. For this week, not much to get excited over I'm afraid!

Now Playing: [Juliet & Romeo](#) (Trailer) [IMDB Summary here](#) .

Now Playing: [Sabbatical](#)

Now Playing: [Shadow Force](#)

16 May: [The Salt Path](#)

16 May: [Final Destination: Bloodlines](#)

16 May: [Hurry up Tomorrow](#)

23 May: [Lilo & Stitch](#)

23 May: [Mission Impossible: The Final Reckoning](#)

23 May: [Die Dekonstruksie van Retta Blom](#) trailer is [here](#)

30 May: [Karate Kid: Legends](#)

30 May: [The Phoenician Scheme](#)

30 May: [Guns Up](#)

6 June: [Ballerina](#)

6 June: [Life of Chuck](#)

First Technology | Midrand | Johannesburg, GAUTENG 2191 ZA

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